

## Psalm 32:1–7

<sup>1</sup> Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. <sup>2</sup> Blessed is the one whose sin the LORD does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit. <sup>3</sup> When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. <sup>4</sup> For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.

<sup>5</sup> Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD. “And you forgave the guilt of my sin. <sup>6</sup> Therefore let all the faithful pray to you while you may be found; surely the rising of the mighty waters will not reach them. <sup>7</sup> You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.

## LUKE 19:1-10

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. <sup>2</sup> A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. <sup>3</sup> He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. <sup>4</sup> So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

<sup>5</sup> When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.” <sup>6</sup> So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. <sup>7</sup> All the people saw this and began to mutter, “He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.”

<sup>8</sup> But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.” <sup>9</sup> Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. <sup>10</sup> For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

BACK IN THE 1980’S AND 90’S THERE WAS A POPULAR TV SHOW CALLED “LIFE STYLES OF THE RICH AND FAMOUS.”

IT WAS A WAY FOR SOME PEOPLE TO VIEW A WORLD TO WHICH THEY DID NOT BELONG AND YET DREAMED OF BEING A PART OF.

TODAY A DIFFERENT TV SHOW CONNECTS FAME AND FORTUNE TOGETHER, IT IS CALLED “LOTTERY DREAM HOME”.

ON IT PEOPLE WHO HAVE WON BIG IN THE LOTTERY ARE ABLE TO USE THEIR NEW FORTUNE TO GET A LITTLE BIT OF FAME.

THEY DO SO BY BEING ON THE PROGRAM AND BUYING THE HOME OF THEIR DREAMS.

OF COURSE, SOMETIMES BEING RICH AND FAMOUS CAN HAVE A DOWN SIDE IN THE SENSE OF HOW SOMEONE GAINS FORTUNE OR FAME.

IN THE CITY OF JERICHO THERE LIVED A MAN NAMED ZACCHAEUS WHO UNDERSTOOD THE NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF FAME AND FORTUNE.

THE PROBLEM WAS ZACCHAEUS, AS THE CHIEF TAX COLLECTOR OF THE CITY, WAS ALSO A TRAITOR.

HE COLLABORATED WITH THE OPPRESSORS OF HIS PEOPLE, PURCHASING THE RIGHT TO COLLECT ROMAN TAXES AND WORSE-OVERSEEING ALL SUCH TAX COLLECTORS.

THOSE MEN MADE THEIR MONEY BY CHARGING WHAT WE MIGHT CALL TODAY A SERVICE FEE.

SUCH FEES WERE SET BY THE TAX COLLECTORS THEMSELVES, WHICH MEANT THEY GOT RICH BY CHEATING THEIR FELLOW JEWS.

THEREFORE, IT COULD BE SAID THAT ZACCHAEUS WAS MORE INFAMOUS THAN FAMOUS. HE WAS WELL KNOWN BUT NOT WELL LIKED.

HOWEVER, THROUGH THE WRITINGS OF LUKE, HE IS FAMOUS AMONG US FOR SOMETHING DIFFERENT.

THERE IS IN FACT A SONG ABOUT HIM THAT TELLS US WHAT HE IS BEST KNOWN FOR TODAY:

“ ZACCHAEUS WAS A WEE LITTLE MAN, AND A WEE LITTLE MAN WAS HE. HE CLIMBED UP IN A SYCAMORE TREE FOR THE LORD HE WANTED TO SEE.”

HOW THE CHIEF COLLECTOR OF JERICHO ENDED UP IN A TREE SO HE COULD SEE JESUS THAT DAY IS FOUND ONLY IN THE GOSPEL OF LUKE.

SO LET’S LOOK AT WHAT CAUSED A RICH AND FAMOUS GROWN MAN TO DO SOMETHING OTHERS MIGHT HAVE VIEWED AS SILLY,

IT ALL BEGAN WHEN JESUS WAS ON THIS WAY TO JERUSALEM AND THE CROSS, AND HE PASSED THROUGH JERICHO.

JESUS WAS WHAT WE MIGHT CALL FAMOUS BY THAT TIME FOR HIS TEACHINGS AND MANY MIRACLES.

CROWDS OFTEN GATHERED AROUND HIM WHERE EVER HE WENT.

AT THE END OF CHAPTER EIGHTEEN IN THE GOSPEL OF LUKE WE ARE TOLD A CROWD HAD GATHERED AROUND THE LORD AS HE APPROACHED THE CITY OF JERICHO.

THE SAVIOR’S ATTENTION WAS DRAWN TO A BLIND MAN, WHO WAS A BEGGAR SITTING ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE CITY.

IGNORING THE CROWD WHO TRIED TO SILENCE HIM, HE CRIED OUT LOUDLY TO JESUS FOR HELP.

JESUS HEALED THE MAN, AND THE WORD QUICKLY SPREAD THROUGH THE CITY.

THE NEWS REACHED MANY THERE, WHO CAME OUT TO SEE JESUS, AND SOME TO FOLLOW ALONG AS HE WALKED BY.

OBVIOUSLY, ZACCHAEUS HEARD JESUS WAS COMING HIS WAY AND MUST ALSO OF HEARD ABOUT THE MIRACLE THAT HAD HAPPENED.

HIS SHORT STATURE MADE IT UNLIKELY HE WOULD SEE OVER THOSE WHO STOOD ALONG THE ROAD.

AND HIS UNPOPULARITY WITH THE PUBLIC MADE IT CERTAIN OTHERS WOULD NOT LET HIM IN THE FRONT.

THEREFORE, THE CHIEF TAX COLLECTOR OF JERICHO CAST ASIDE HIS DIGNITY, TO RUN TO THE NEAREST TREE AND SIT THERE TO WAIT FOR JESUS TO COME THAT WAY.

THE SECOND VERSE OF THE SONG I MENTIONED EXPLAINS WHAT HAPPEN TO HIM WHEN JESUS CAME NEAR:

“AND WHEN THE SAVIOR PASSED THAT WAY HE LOOKED UP IN THE TREE, AND SAID, ‘ZACCHAEUS, YOU COME DOWN! FOR I’M GOING TO YOUR HOUSE TODAY.’”

YES, JESUS SAW ZACCHAEUS IN THE TREE, AND WE MAY WELL IMAGINE PEOPLE TOLD JESUS WHAT A DESPICABLE MAN THE CHIEF TAX COLLECTOR WAS.

THE CROWD PROBABLY EXPECTED JESUS TO SIMPLY PASS BY ZACCHAEUS, AS HE OFFERED ONE OF HIS MANY SAYINGS ABOUT STORING UP TREASURES IN HEAVEN AND NOT ON EARTH.

THEY WERE SHOCKED THEREFORE, WHEN RATHER THAN IGNORING THE MAN IN THE TREE, JESUS STOPPED AND SPOKE TO HIM.

WORSE STILL, HIS VOICE WAS FILLED WITH WELCOME AND NOT SCORN.

AND THEN THE SAVIOR INSISTED THAT HE MUST GO AND STAY AT THE HOME OF THE HATED MAN.

LUKE INFORMS US ABOUT THE UNPOPULARITY OF JESUS’ CHOICE TO SPEND SOME PERSONAL TIME WITH A MAN LARGELY HATED BY THEM.

SO, WHAT WAS IT JESUS SAW IN ZACCHAEUS THAT WENT BEYOND THE CROWD'S HATRED FOR BEING A GREEDY TRAITOR, AS WELL AS HIS OTHER SINS?

JESUS, SAW BEYOND THE OBVIOUS AND FOUND THE GOOD THAT WAS WITHIN ZACCHAEUS, AS WELL AS THE POTENTIAL WITHIN HIM OF GREATER GOODNESS.

THIS IS WORTH PAUSING TO THINK ABOUT. THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO ONLY KNOW OF GOD AS A RIGHTEOUS AND STERN JUDGE OF SINNERS.

SOME MAY EVEN IMAGINE GOD CONTINUALLY RECORDING BOTH THE OBVIOUS AND HIDDEN SINS WITHIN THEMSELVES AND OTHERS.

THE LORD GOD, INDEED SEES AND KNOWS OUR FAULTS AND SINS AND SHORTCOMINGS, EVEN THOSE WE MIGHT KEEP FROM OURSELVES.

HOWEVER, TODAY'S GOSPEL STORY REMINDS US GOD SEES WITHIN US MORE THAN JUST OUR SINFULNESS.

THE LORD ALSO SEES THE GOOD WITHIN US AND THE POTENTIAL WE HAVE TO INCREASE THAT GOODNESS.

A MAN NAMED LLOYD C. DOUGLAS WROTE THIS ABOUT WHAT MIGHT HAVE OCCURRED INSIDE ZACCHAEUS' HOUSE:

“ZACCHAEUS,” SAID THE CARPENTER GENTLY, “WHAT DID YOU SEE THAT MADE YOU DESIRE THIS PEACE?”

“GOOD MASTER—I SAW—MIRRORED IN YOUR EYES—THE FACE OF THE ZACCHAEUS I WAS MEANT TO BE!”

YES, JESUS SAW WHO ZACCHAEUS COULD BECOME, AND HE SEES JUST AS CLEARLY WHO EACH ONE OF US CAN BE WITH THE HELP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

AND THAT THOUGHT BRINGS US BACK TO ZACCHAEUS AND HIS MOMENT OF TRUTH, AND HOW HE WELCOMED JESUS WHO HAD REACHED OUT TO HIM.

ACCORDING TO THE STORY WE KNOW ZACCHAEUS WAS INTERESTED IN JESUS AND PERSISTENT IN HIS QUEST TO SEE HIM.

WE CAN ALSO SURMISE THAT THE CHIEF TAX COLLECTOR OF JERICHO WAS AS SHOCKED AS THE CROWD WHEN JESUS SOUNDED GLAD TO SEE HIM AND WANTED TO COME TO HIS HOME.

ZACCHAEUS HEARD THE DISSENTION OF THE PEOPLE OVER JESUS' CHOOSING TO BE THE GUEST OF THE SINFUL TRAITOR.

SURELY, HE ALSO HEARD WITHIN HIS HEART AND SOUL THE TRUTH OF THE ACCUSATIONS AGAINST HIM.

BUT RATHER THAN DENYING OR DISCOUNTING BOTH THE SPOKEN AND UNSPOKEN CRITICISM THAT Poured FROM HIS FELLOW JEWS-HE TOOK IT TO HEART.

BEING WELCOMED BY JESUS DREW ZACCHAEUS INTO AN ACTIVE REPENTANCE. BORN OUT OF HIS JOY IN THE LORD.

ACTIVE IN THE SENSE THAT HE KNEW HE DID NOT NEED TO VERBALLY CONFESS HIS WRONG DOING, AS MUCH AS HE NEEDED TO DO WHAT HE COULD TO MAKE AMENDS.

SO FIRST, HE PROMISED TO GIVE AWAY HALF HIS WEALTH, MOST OF WHICH WAS PROBABLY WHAT WE WOULD CALL “ILL GOTTEN GAINS.”

NEXT, WITH THE REMAINDER OF HIS MONEY HE PROMISED TO PAY BACK THOSE WHOM HE HAD CHEATED WELL BEYOND THE MINIMUM REQUIRED BY JEWISH LAW.

JESUS ACKNOWLEDGED HIS REPENTANCE AND PUBLICLY, FORGIVE HIM, BY DECLARING ZACCHAEUS IS AMONG THE LOST HE HAD COME TO SAVE.

THE LORD ALSO LETS THE CROWD KNOW ZACCHAEUS IS ONE OF THEM-HE IS A SON OF ABRAHAM AND NOT AN OUTSIDER.

THUS, ZACCHAEUS EXPERIENCES THE JOY OF FORGIVENESS DAVID EXPRESSED IN PSALM 32:1.

“HAPPY ARE THOSE WHOSE TRANSGRESSION IS FORGIVEN, WHOSE SIN IS COVERED.”

THIS BRINGS US TO THE REAL REASON THE “WEE LITTLE MAN” NAMED ZACCHAEUS SHOULD BE FAMOUS TODAY

WHAT IS WORTH REMEMBERING ABOUT HIM IS THE VISIBLE AND PRACTICAL REPENTANCE OF ZACCHAEUS; RATHER THAN HIS HEIGHT OR HIM CLIMBING A TREE.

AND IT IS BY REMEMBERING WE MIGHT BE INSPIRED TO CONSIDER ONE KEY MESSAGE WE CAN FIND FOR OUR LIVES IN THE GOSPEL STORY.

THE MESSAGE IS FOUND IN CONSIDERING YOUR PRESENT RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LORD.

HOW WOULD YOU ASSESS YOUR SPIRITUAL STATE AND RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD?

ARE YOU WHERE YOU HOPE TO BE, DOING WHAT YOU FEEL GOD IS CALLING YOU TO DO AS BEST AS YOU ARE ABLE? OR DO YOU FEEL AS IF YOU ARE YOU STUCK IN A TREE?

ARE YOU TRYING TO CATCH A GLIMPSE OF JESUS, BUT NOT REALLY EXPECTING HIM TO NOTICE YOU, LET ALONE CALL OUT TO YOU IN WELCOME?

OR DO YOU THINK THAT, KNOWING OWN YOUR SINS, IT IS NOT LIKELY JESUS WOULD BE INTERESTED IN SPENDING SOME QUALITY TIME WITH YOU?

PERHAPS, LIKE ME, YOU ARE NOT THE BEST HOUSEKEEPER AND THE VERY LAST THING YOU WANT IS AN UNEXPECTED GUEST EVEN IF THAT GUEST IS JESUS?

A CHRISTIAN AUTHOR NAMED JASON SOROSKI OFFERS A RESPONSE THESE KIND OF QUESTIONS, WHICH MIGHT BE HELPFUL.

HE WROTE: “JUST LIKE ZACCHAEUS, JESUS MUST VISIT OUR HOUSE TODAY. HE HAS NO REQUIREMENTS FOR US BEFORE HE COMES TO VISIT. ”

“WE DON’T HAVE TO MAKE ALL THINGS RIGHT WITH ALL OUR DEALINGS BEFORE LETTING HIM IN. HE ALREADY KNOWS WHO WE ARE AND WHAT SHAPE OUR HOUSE IS IN.

HE WANTS TO BE THERE ANYWAY. HIS PRESENCE ALONE AND HIS LOVE FOR US WILL LEAD US TO DO THINGS WE NEVER THOUGHT WE COULD DO:

EVEN ADMITTING WHERE WE HAVE BEEN WRONG AND MAKING THINGS RIGHT.

WE CAN EASILY ASSUME THAT ZACCHAEUS LIVED A DIFFERENT, FULLER LIFE AFTER THIS ENCOUNTER WITH JESUS. AND WE CAN HAVE THE SAME EXPERIENCE.”

TRULY, THE LORD WANTS US TO LIVE THE FULLEST LIFE POSSIBLE RIGHT NOW ON EARTH-AND TO REJOICE ALWAYS IN THE ETERNAL PLACE HE HAS PREPARED FOR US.

MUCH LIKE JESUS DID FOR ZACCHAEUS, HE STANDS AND CALLS TO EACH ONE OF US, AWAITING OUR REPLY.

HOW WILL WE RESPOND TO OUR SAVIOR’S INVITATION TO ALLOW HIM INTO OUR HOMES AND LIVES, NOT JUST ONCE OR ONCE IN A WHILE, BUT AGAIN AND AGAIN?

LET US NOT HESITATE TO TAKE JESUS HOME WITH US WHEN WE LEAVE THIS PLACE TODAY.

AND THE REASON FOR US TO HAVE THE CONFIDENCE TO DO THIS IS FOUND THROUGHOUT THE BIBLE. FOR EXAMPLE:

IN EPHESIANS 2:8 WE ARE TOLD: FOR BY GRACE YOU HAVE BEEN SAVED THROUGH FAITH, AND THIS IS NOT YOUR DOING; IT IS A GIFT OF GOD.

WE CAN ALSO TRUST THE PROMISE OF THE LORD FOUND IN HEBREWS 13:5: GOD HAS SAID, “I WILL NEVER LEAVE YOU; NEVER WILL I FORSAKE YOU.”

THEREFORE, MAY WE FIND JOY IN GOD’S GRACE, WHICH IS GOD’S LOVE AND MERCY GIVEN TO US, NOT BECAUSE OF WHO WE ARE, BUT BECAUSE OF WHO GOD IS. AMEN

SERMON SUMMARY: LUKE 19:1-10

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